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SUBJECT: MFA STATEMENT ON THE SECRETARY'S MAY 31
ANNOUNCEMENT ON IRAN

REF: STATE 87682

Sensitive but unclassified; protect accordingly.

¶1. (U) Following in para 2 is the Embassy's unofficial translation of the text of a Russian MFA statement, released on June 1, on the Secretary's May 31 Iran announcement.

¶2. (U) Begin text of translated MFA statement:

Moscow welcomes the announcement by the American side of its willingness to join in direct negotiations with Tehran with the goal of settling the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program. We are convinced that a negotiated solution to this problem, as with any other crisis in the world today, is the only logical alternative. Expanding the format of the current negotiations on this question became urgent long ago, and precedent exists for doing it. We sincerely hope that the participation of the United States in the negotiations might help improve U.S.-Iranian relations, which have been in a state of crisis for more than two decades, contrary to the interests of the people of both countries. The normalization of U.S.-Iranian relations would benefit regional and international stability, and help bring about the resolution of other crises in the region.

For its part, Russia will continue to actively participate in collective efforts to find a political-diplomatic solution. For this, we consider it important that the prospects for a negotiated solution not be made more difficult by attempts to threaten Tehran or add to the negotiating agenda issues unrelated to the central objective of settling the problem of Iran's nuclear program.

Today a real chance has emerged to achieve such a settlement. We call on Iran to respond to it constructively.

End text of MFA statement.

¶3. (U) Press comment thus far on the U.S. initiative has been minimal, although both it and the initial Iranian response have been widely reported.

¶4. (SBU) Initial reactions from think-tank experts on foreign and security policy issues have been generally positive. In June 1 discussions, Ivan Safranchuk of the Moscow office of the Center for Defense Information and Dmitriy Suslov of the Council on Foreign and Defense policy welcomed the U.S. offer of negotiations, with both adding that they and other colleagues had long called for the U.S. to enter negotiations with

Iran on the nuclear issue. Suslov voiced concern, however, that the consequences for Russia might be problematic, as a direct U.S.-Iran channel might leave Moscow with less influence. While welcoming the U.S. step, Safranchuk did not expect near-term consequences, predicting that Iran would try end of the Bush Administration's term of office. In his judgment, Iran would not be prepared in any event to give up its enrichment program, which it was pursuing as a matter of national pride and regional status.

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